



## Free Press Viewpoint

# Republican oath a step backward

Sometimes you have to wonder at the stupid things supposedly smart politicians do.

Take, for instance, the Kansas Republican party. No, really; you can have it.

The party is sitting in the catbird seat, or should be. The Republicans own Kansas as they never have before: All state elected offices, all but 33 seats in the House and all but eight in the state Senate, all four congressional districts, both U.S. Senate seats.

What could be wrong, then? And why would Republican leaders send a "loyalty" oath to legislative candidates, demanding that they pledge allegiance to the party's leadership in the House and Senate if elected?

The first thing you have to understand is that Kansas, for years, has had not a two-party system, like most states, but a three-party system where Republicans divide at the drop of a hat into conservative and "moderate" factions.

The conservatives hew to strict beliefs in social principles, including opposition to abortion, while the "moderates" have been known to align with Democrats on votes involving social issues and state spending.

These moderates, for the most part, aren't flaming liberal followers of Kathleen Sebelius, but compared to some of the conservatives, they can look pretty left wing.

And that chafes the conservatives, we know. Some claim these moderate Republicans are people who would have become Democrats in any other state, but knew they'd never get elected to anything in Kansas that way.

The conservative wing controls the House and at least a share of the congressional delegation. It controls the party leadership and would like to run the Senate, too. The Senate divides more evenly, with just the eight Democrats, about 14 conservatives and 14 moderates on any given vote, plus four or five members who float back and forth.

Gov. Sam Brownback is the darling of this right wing. Conservative groups led by the state Chamber of Commerce have recruited House members to run against some of the more liberal senators.

Whatever prompted the party to dream up this loyalty oath, it's a mistake and not likely to help the conservative cause. Any legislator or candidate who'd sign such a thing would be giving up the ability to vote as his or her constituents want. And that may not be blindly to follow the leadership.

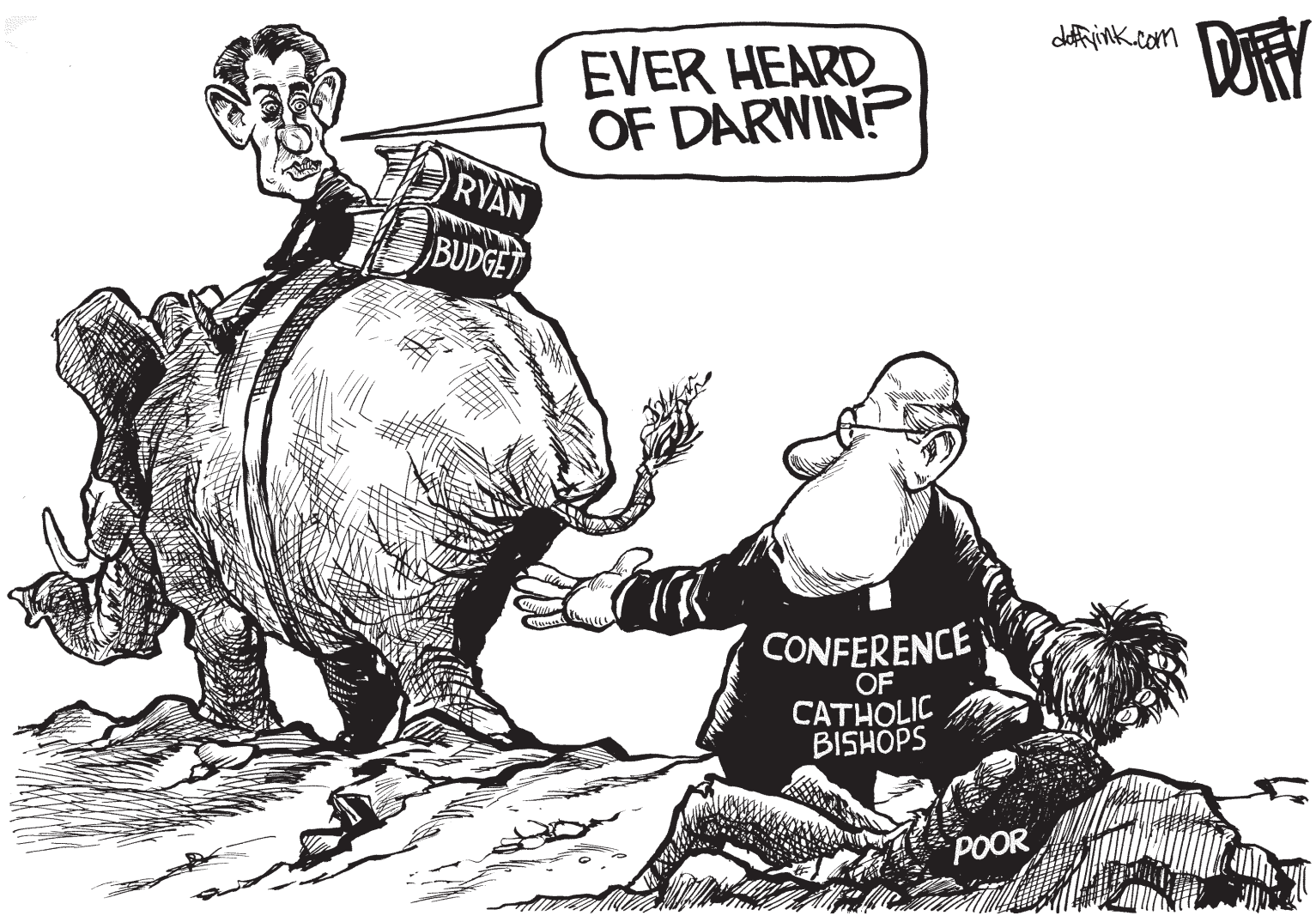
There is nothing wrong with being conservative or wanting conservatives to control the Legislature. Kansas is a conservative state, and voters gave the governor a huge majority in voting two years ago. They elected a conservative House and mostly conservative state officials.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to shift the Senate to the right, either, but there's a way to go about consolidating your position, one that might work. Then there are other ways.

And when you do something as undemocratic as putting out a loyalty oath to bind supposedly independent legislators, you've crossed a line. Like the heavy-handed plan to target all the supposedly liberal senators, it could backfire.

In August, we'll see just how successful these tactics have been, but from here, the oath in particular looks like a loser.

— Steve Haynes



# Long road to city ends with great food

It seems like it takes forever to get to Kansas City, but we made the trek east last week to see our son and attend the annual Kansas Press Association meeting.

I was about ready to jump out of my skin waiting for Steve to finish up with Thursday's *Colby Free Press* so we could get on the road. The minor detail of missing lunch was probably mostly to blame for my bad mood and snappish disposition.

I was also afraid we wouldn't get to Lawrence in time to take our son out for dinner. We had promised him several weeks ago that we would have dinner before continuing on to Overland Park, where the convention was.

I should have relaxed and had some lunch instead of waiting around until 3 p.m. when Steve finally showed up. Steve had called son, explained the problem and they had it well in hand.

Once fed and on the road, I was in a better frame of mind when we called our boy and he gave us two late-dining choices — Chinese or Mexican. Both, he assured us, were excellent new restaurants which were building good reputations for interesting and tasty food.

We chose Mexican, and it was tasty and interesting. The restaurant specializes in dishes from all over Mexico and was a great change



**Cynthia Haynes**

• Open Season

from our usual Tex-Mex fare. Son made off with my leftovers, which I would have happily taken home to have the next day — if I had been going home. Steve had no leftovers, but he accidentally left his credit card behind after paying the bill.

He didn't discover this minor detail until two days later when again it was time to pay for dinner as we were about to leave the city for home. It didn't take too long to think back to the last time he had used it, so we headed back towards Lawrence.

We had to return to Lawrence anyway because we had promised son we would bring him barbecue from one of our favorite KC eateries — Gates Bar-B-Q.

While we had a little trouble finding a parking place on Thursday night in Lawrence, Saturday night was a total zoo. There were people in everything from tuxes and formals to shorts

and T-shirts. It was Saturday night in a college town, and it was hopping.

So, I hopped out of the car while Steve circled the block to check on the AWOL credit card. The restaurant had the card safe behind the counter, so I was able to grab it and we were off to hand over the barbecue. As we passed the Sand Bar, we noticed a bunch of folks in straw hats and paper leis getting on a bus. Seems Jimmy Buffet was playing in Kansas City. Wish we could have gone, but home was calling.

Somewhere outside of Manhattan, we pulled into a rest area and ate a picnic supper from the barbecue we had bought in Kansas City.

We got home a little after midnight.

It's a long way to Kansas City, but it you go, you might meet some nice, honest people along the way and get some really wonderful barbecue.

I think I'll do it again — but maybe not until next year.

*Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkans.com*

# Watch for the worker behind the barrel

To the Editor:

Orange barrels along Kansas highways are a positive sign — they show that improvements are being made to roads, that jobs and economic development opportunities are increasing across the state and that motorists will be able to get where they are going more efficiently for years to come.

Behind those orange barrels are highway workers, and those workers deserve our respect and attention every time we enter a work zone. Having vehicles drive by within inches of you is scary and can be dangerous.

What many motorists don't realize is that work zone safety is for them as well.

Nearly 90 percent of the people hurt or killed in work zone crashes are not highway workers — they're motorists. And the No. 1 cause of crashes in work zones is inattention.

This is why we participate in National Work Zone Awareness Week this week. It's a time to highlight the need for work zone safety for both highway workers and motorists, and it's an important message that needs to be remembered all year long. You can learn more about this effort on our website at [www.ksdot.org](http://www.ksdot.org). Just click on the Go Orange logo on the main page.

We encourage everyone to slow down and pay extra attention every time they see those orange barrels along the highways. Lives are on the line in work zones, and the life you save could be your own.

Mike King, Topeka Secretary, Kansas Dept. of Transportation

## Colby visit brings kudos

To the Editor:

I'd like to share a recent, very positive experience in your town.

My husband and I are currently having to live apart due to my job and the need to sell our home.



## Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

On the Friday of Easter weekend, he took off driving west from Kansas City and I took off driving east from Loveland, Colo. We had done this one other time, meeting in Hays. This time, I told him he had to do the longer drive! Thus, we met in Colby, a place that we'd never stayed at, though we had stopped in a few times at the Pizza Hut.

As we got around on Saturday, we decided to look for a home-town place to have our breakfast, choosing to forego fast food or chain food. As we drove through your downtown, we realized that many places chose to close for the Easter weekend.

We were about to give up when we noticed that a little establishment on the east side was open. That turned out to be such a fantastic experience, that I knew right away I had to write to you.

The name of this little gem tickled us, as it included my husband's high school nickname of SMOF! There weren't very many people there, but every one of the customers stopped to say hi to us. The owners were so accommodating and wonderful to visit with.

The meal was superb and we could not leave there without purchasing some of their homemade bread, and wow, was it fantastic!

As we visited with a few of the customers, we were asked if we had Easter plans. After telling our story of being in Colby and that no, indeed, we did not, we received an invitation to join these people at their first service of a new church, meeting at the high school.

Just these two experiences with Smoffee's and Celebration Community Church were enough to make us realize what a blessed community you have and one that we will choose to visit again. Hopefully, that visit will find us traveling together next time, rather than meeting there.

And if your readers haven't checked these two places out, we highly encourage it.

Lawrence and Tami Murdock Loveland, Colo.

## Where to write, call

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**U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran**, 354 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510 (202) 228-6966. Fax (202) 225-5124 [moran.senate.gov/public/](http://moran.senate.gov/public/)

**U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp**, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124. Web site: [huelskamp.house.gov](http://huelskamp.house.gov)

**State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer**, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St., Room 225-E., Topeka, Kan. 66612, (785) 296-7399 [ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:ralph.ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us)

**State Rep. Rick Billinger**, Docking Building, Room 754, Topeka Kan., 66612, (785) 296-7659 [rick.billinger@house.ks.gov](mailto:rick.billinger@house.ks.gov)

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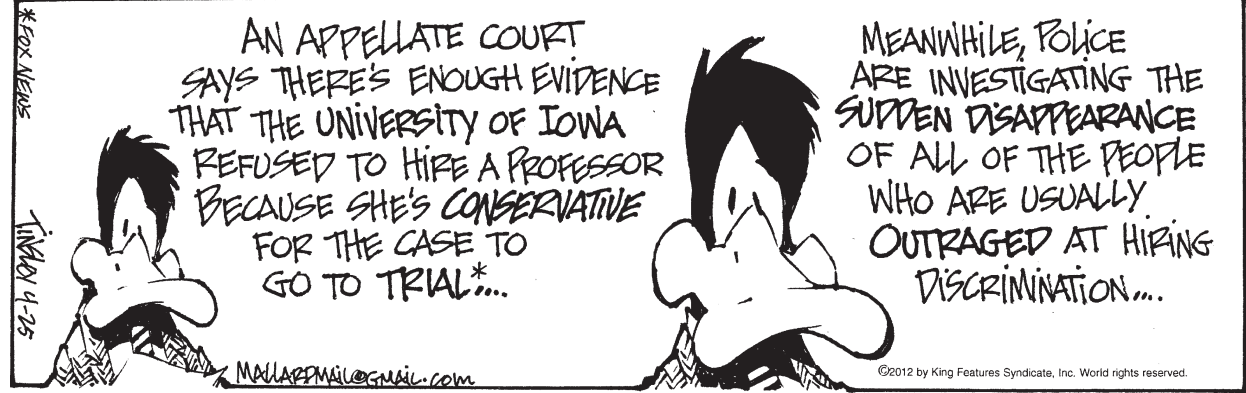
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## Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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